

Message from Fr. Paul in New Zealand - A Blessed Three-Days

From Friday July 3rd through Sunday the 5th, the humble and quiet corner of Sambeto was raised up to sacred heights and saw spiritual events.

From anonymity and insignificance Sambeto became the centre of Orthodoxy in the land of Fiji -- this far flung island land of the Pacific.

In only three days a sacred baptismal font was constructed in the courtyard of the mission house, a beautiful baptistery whose equal can be found neither here nor in New Zealand. Here visitations, conversations, and religious education took place. Thus, this little corner became a sign of *anaphora* to the port city of Nadi.

On Friday, in the presence of certain distinguished people of this community and land, the very first baptisms took place -- a couple; Symi and Louisa -- who received the baptismal names of Bartholomaios and Lydia.

On Saturday the couple's wedding took place in an atmosphere of appropriate simplicity and royalty which springs forth from our sacred Orthodox tradition. Special emphasis to the event came from the love and offering of the sisters Gavriilia and Andrianna, as well as from the presence of Father Christodoulos (who just arrived from Colorado, of the United States) together with the most beloved Mr. John Johns (an attorney of the *Omogenia*). Both the newlywed couple and everyone in attendance were quite moved.

The grace of God was richly shared out upon this corner of Sambeto, which from here on out has entered into the annals of Orthodox history. The hearts of all the simple Fijians felt this historic significance, and they experienced unprecedented moments of emotion and joy.

On Sunday of this blessed three-day period we celebrated the Divine Liturgy. This Liturgy was the second ever, since the foundation of the earth, to occur on this little island that floats in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It marked the beginning of the sacred apostolic work of Orthodoxy in Fiji.

Orthodoxy of the Fijians and of the many Pacific Islanders has now entered into history. God has blessed it. Blessed be His name.

Sunday, July 5th 2009

+Amphilochios, Metropolitan of New Zealand